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Items for discussion and decision: data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Work on the review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2016/220 and past practices. It informs the Statistical Commission about the work carried out by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in cooperation with the United Nations system, in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The present report describes the preparation of the annual report of the Secretary-General on the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2016/75), based on the data and analysis of the global Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, as mandated by the General Assembly (see resolution 70/1, para. 83). Also described is the work undertaken to establish the database on the global indicators, including a data and metadata repository, and on supporting countries in the implementation of the indicators at the national level. The Commission is invited to take note of the work carried out by the Statistics Division in cooperation with the United Nations system.

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I. Introduction

1. In order to promote accountability to their citizens, Member States committed to providing a systematic follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national, regional and global levels. The high-level political forum on sustainable development was mandated to play a central role in overseeing the follow-up and review processes at the global level. Member States agreed that the follow-up and review at the high-level political forum would be informed by an annual progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals to be prepared by the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the United Nations system, based on the global indicator framework and the data produced by national statistical systems and information collected at the regional level (see General Assembly resolution 70/1, para. 83).

II. Where the world stands: first progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals

2. The Secretary-General's first progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals, (E/2016/75), is based on the global indicator framework developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and agreed to, as a starting point, at the forty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission, held in March 2016 (E/2016/24, chap. I, sect. B, decision 47/101). The work of the Group is described in detail in its report to the Commission under agenda item 3 (a). (E/CN.3/2017/2)

3. Based on the data and the storylines provided by agencies across the United Nations system and beyond, the progress report presents the first overview of the global situation relative to the 17 Goals of the 2030 Agenda using the currently available data to highlight the most significant gaps and challenges. Some targets are not reflected in the initial report, either because of a lack of data or because they are measured by indicators that are still undergoing methodological development. For most indicators presented in the report, values represent global, regional and/or subregional aggregates. The aggregates are calculated from national data collected by international agencies from national statistical systems on the basis of their respective mandates and specialized expertise. National data are often adjusted for international comparability and, where lacking, are estimated by international agencies in order to derive global, regional and subregional aggregates.

4. In addition to the progress report, the Secretary-General launched the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016* on 19 July 2016, during the ministerial segment of the high-level political forum. The report is available in an interactive format on the Sustainable Development Goal indicators website of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat.[1] It includes data and analysis on the Sustainable Development Goals intended for a wider audience in a user-friendly format with charts and infographics on selected indicators, using the same data as the progress report of the Secretary-General. Both reports are the results of the close collaboration of United Nations entities, with

[1] Available at http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/.

input from international and regional agencies that contributed data and analysis based on their mandates and expertise.

5. Besides the two reports, a supplementary statistical annex containing global and regional aggregates of the indicators was released.[2] The two reports represent the first official review of where the world stands in relation to the goals of the 2030 Agenda and will serve as key benchmarks throughout the implementation period of the 2030 Agenda over the next 15 years.

III. Sustainable Development Goal indicators website

6. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016* was complemented by the release of the Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database[3], which provides transparency on the data used for global reporting. The database contains data on the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators used in the two above-mentioned reports and includes country-level data as well as regional and global aggregates. The database, maintained by the Statistics Division, includes data for 115 of the 230 Sustainable Development Goal indicators, with almost 500 data series and more than 330,000 data records. The data series comprise Sustainable Development Goal indicators series and additional data series under many of the indicators.[4] Many of the data series contain disaggregated data.

7. The data and accompanying metadata have been provided by international agencies and entities according to their respective mandates. The metadata repository[5] contains metadata for most of the indicators included in the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database. The metadata follow a template discussed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goals and provide information on the data source and compilation process. Often, national data were adjusted for international comparability or, where data were missing, they were estimated. Data estimated at the national level and used for the calculation of global and regional aggregates are not always made available. For each indicator value, the responsible international agency is also requested to indicate whether the data were adjusted, estimated, modelled or are the result of global monitoring.

8. The metadata and their presentation will be further improved in cooperation with countries and regional and international agencies. Similarly, efforts will continue to ensure and improve the quality of the data.

9. For some of the 115 indicators included in the database, only additional data series (instead of Sustainable Development Goals data series) are available, which are used to provide data for closely related indicators. For 9 of the 115 global indicators, only regional and global aggregates are available.

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[2] Available at http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2016/secretary-general-sdg-report-2016--Statistical-Annex.pdf.

[3] Available at http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/.

[4] The data series identified by the symbol "SD" correspond to the global indicator framework that was agreed upon, as a starting point, by the Statistical Commission at its forty-seventh session. Additional series are identified by the symbol "+".

[5] Available at http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/.

10. The Sustainable Development Goal indicators website, maintained by the Statistics Division, presents all information related to the development and implementation of the indicator framework. It provides access to the related reports, the global Indicators Database and the metadata repository. It also contains the information on the work and activities of Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

IV. Development cooperation activities of the Statistics Division on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators

11. The Statistics Division, the regional commissions, the specialized agencies and the funds and programmes of the United Nations system have always worked closely together in the area of statistical development. Currently a $10 million United Nations Development Account project, with the participation of all regional commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Statistics Division, is being launched to strengthen national statistical systems for the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals and to address specific data gaps.

12. The Statistics Division is implementing two more United Nations Development Account projects, which are aimed at enhancing the statistical capacity of Member States for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals. One project provides assistance to national statistical offices in six pilot countries to measure, monitor, assess and report on progress on achieving the 2030 Agenda. The other project supports Member States' efforts to develop and strengthen environment statistics and integrated environmental-economic accounting for improved monitoring of sustainable development.

13. The Statistics Division also works closely with other international agencies within the United Nations Development Group to provide assistance to countries on implementing the Sustainable Development Goal indicators and strengthening statistical capacities for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The Statistics Division also co-chairs, with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Development Group Task Team on Sustainable Development Goals Country Reporting Guidelines, which are expected to be approved by the Development Group by the end of 2016.

14. A comprehensive overview of the Statistics Division's activities on technical capacity-building, including those related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, is provided in the report of the Secretary-General on statistical capacity-building. The report of the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/CN.3/2017/3), provides information about the overall

strategy for statistical capacity-building for monitoring the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in countries.

V. Work programme of the inter-agency working group on the global Sustainable Development Goals review

15. Many international agencies and organizations contributed data and analysis to the Sustainable Development Goals progress report and the Indicators Database and metadata repository. In order to provide a working mechanism for the United Nations system to prepare the report, as mandated by the General Assembly in resolution 70/1, the Statistics Division has convened several teleconferences with the agencies that provide data and analysis for the preparation of the annual Sustainable Development Goals progress reports and the global database. It has been proposed that face-to-face meetings also be convened on a regular basis (once or twice a year) to allow for an easier exchange and more in-depth technical discussion.

16. This inter-agency working group carries out the following activities:

(a) Reviews and discusses plans for the production of the annual progress report of the Secretary-General and the complementary, user-friendly annual Sustainable Development Goals report;

(b) Agrees on the structure, scope and coverage of the yearly reports and related contributions by the relevant organizations;

(c) Contributes to the regular update of the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database, including by providing updates and refinements to the metadata, as needed;

(d) Exchanges information and updates on the capacity-development activities related to statistics and indicators for the 2030 Development Agenda;

(e) Reports annually to the Statistical Commission.

VI. Conclusions

17. The Statistics Division will continue to coordinate the work for the preparation of the annual reports, maintain the global database and convene meetings and teleconferences of the inter-agency working group on the global Sustainable Development Goals review.

VII. Action required by the Statistical Commission

18. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of the present report.